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**1339. Mrs D van der Walt (DA) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

Whether she will declare Early Childhood Development an essential service; if not, why not; if so, what are the further relevant details?                        `

**Response**

The Early Childhood Development function still legally rests with the Department of Social Development; and the Department of Basic Education has no legal standing to make such a declaration. That said, the South African courts have encouraged a restrictive interpretation of ‘essential services’, and the Essential Services Committee has previously ruled that education should not be deemed an essential service. The Department of Basic Education will apply these same principles to Early Childhood Development practitioners.